

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 1791
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO

S E C R E T MANAGUA 0882

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, SHUM, PINT, SOCI, NU
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH SOMOZA FEB 22

SUMMARY: AMB MET WITH SOMOZA FOR OVER AN HOUR ON FEB 22 TO DISCUSS HIS TRIP TO WASHINGTON AND ANY INFORMATION SOMOZA MIGHT HAVE FOR HIM TO TAKE ALONG. SOMOZA GAVE FURTHER DETAILS REGARDING PLANNED CONCESSIONS, COMPLAINED FURTHER ABOUT U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, AND RE-ACTED STRONGLY TO POSSIBLE MILGROUP MOVE. END SUMMARY

1. AMB REQUESTED MEETING WITH SOMOZA TO ASK IF HE HAD ANY MESSAGES FOR HIM TO TAKE TO WASHINGTON. SOMOZA, WHO FOR THE MOST PART WAS IN A GOOD HUMOR, SAID YES, THAT WE WERE GOING TOO FAR IN OUR HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN. IT CAUSED THE OPPOSITION TO BE ACTIVIST. THEY WOULD ALWAYS BE COMPLAINING UNTIL THE U.S. STOPPED APPLYING PRESSURE. SOMOZA CITED A US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT ARTICLE, IN WHICH NSC ADVISOR BREZINSKI ACKNOWLEDGE THE U.S. WAS CONDUCTING AN UNFAIR POLICY

BY PUNISHING ONLY THOSE COUNTRIES WHERE WE COULD GET AWAY WITH IT.

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2. THE AMB RESPONDED BY CITING THE RECENT STATEMENTS BY ASST SECRETARY

TODMAN AND MS. SHELTON. HE SAID WE HAD RECOGNIZED PROGRESS WHEN IT HAD OCCURRED. THE AMBASSADOR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN ACHIEVING CHANGE. BUT THERE IS NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT TO SOLVE THE CURRENT CRISIS AND USG WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED INF THERE

WERE NO FURTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS.

3. THE AMB ASKED SOMOZA IF HE COULD PREVIEW HIS SPEECH ON SUNDAY AT THE LIBERAL PARTY RALLY. SOMOZA SAID HE WOULD PROMISED INCREASED SOCIAL WELFARE FOR RURAL WORKERS BY SPREADING WELFARE COVERAGE TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE POOR. HE WOULD ANNOUNCE THAT HE WOULD OPEN THE POLITICAL PROCESS THROUGH ELECTORAL REFORM AND CALL FOR DIALOGUE. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMB'S QUESTION HE SAID HE WOULD ANNOUNCE HIS RETIREMENT TO PRIVATE LIFE AT THE END OF HIS TERM. SOMOZA SAID THIS WOULD BE IMPORTANT BECAUSE, OTHERWISE, THE OPPOSITION WOULD INTERPRET HIS SOCIAL WELFARE ANNOUNCEMENT AS AN ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE HIS FURTHER AMBITION. HE ASSURED THE AMB THAT HE WOULD NOT RE-ELECT HIMSELF NOR TAKE THE POSITION OF CHIEF DIRECTOR OF THE GN. HE ALSO SAID PEOPLE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO INTERPRET HIS SOCIAL WELFARE MESSAGE AS REPRISAL AGAINST THE STRIKING BUSINESSMEN BECAUSE HE WAS A BUSINESSMAN TOO AND ALSO WOULD HAVE TO PAY.

4. THE AMB REFERRED TO THE FACT THAT THE OPPOSITION HAD NO FAITH IN THE ELECTORAL MACHINERY AND THAT SOME CHANGE TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED. SOMOZA SAID THE CONSERVATIVES WERE REACTIONARIES, THAT THEY WERE ALWAYS DISTRUSTFUL BUT THAT IT WAS A GOOD POINT

SOMOZA ALSO SAID THAT ON MONDAY THE NICARAGUAN AMB IN MEXICO WOULD CONTACT THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSN. AND REQUEST THEY SELECT A PERSON TO INVESTIGATE THE INVESTIGATION OF THE CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION. IN ANOTHER MOVE, HE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
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A NATIONAL COMMISSION TO STUDY THE INVESTIGATION WITH THE CHIEF OF POLICE. THE AMB URGED SOMOZA TO MOVE FAST ON THIS MATTER AND SOMOZA AGREED.

5. THE AMB RAISED THE QUESTION OF AN EXTRADITION REQUEST IN THE CASE OF US CIT, DR. PEDRO RAMOS. SOMOZA SAID THAT A US CIT IN THE US COULD NOT BE EXTRADITED UNDER THE TREATY, AND THAT RAMOS WOULD HAVE TO BE INVESTIGATED AND JUDGED IN THE U.S. (COMMENT: EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE DEPT INSTRUCTIONS HOW TO RESPOND TO SOMOZA ON THIS POINT). THE AMB SAID THIS POINT SHOULD BE CLARIFIED. WE DO NOT PREJUDGE RAMOS' GUILT OR INNOCENCE BUT FELT THAT THE ASSASSINATION SHOULD
D
BE CLARIFIED TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE IN NICARAGUA.

6. THE AMB RAISED THE FACT THAT THE QUESTION OF A MILGROUP MOVE TO THE EMBASSY WAS CURRENT. SOMOZA REPLIED STRONGLY THAT IF IT HAPPENED IT WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS A HOSTILE ACT. IT WOULD BREAK OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH THE GON HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING OFFICE SPACE FOR THE MILGROUP. HE ASKED FOR US TO THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH HE COULD TOLERATE. EVEN WHEN HE LIFTED MARTIAL LAW THE U.S. GOT THE CREDIT, NOT HE. HE REFERRED TO PRESIDENT CARTER REFUSING TO TAKE AN UNPLEASANT LETTER FROM REP. KOCH AS AN EXAMPLE THAT ANY

PRESIDENT WOULD REFUSE TO BE SLAPPED IN THE FACE. ALSO HE SAID SUCH A MOVE WOULD MAKE THE GN, WHOSE MEMBERS ADMIRE THE US, ANGRY AT THE US. HE SAID HE WANTED US TO THINK OVER THE IMPLICATIONS AND NOT BE HASTY.

7. SOMOZA SAID HE HAD TALKED TO PRES. ODUBER ON 21. HE SAID ODUBER HAD CONGRATULATED HIM ON NOT BEING OVERTHROWN AND HAD REFERRED TO ASST SECY TODMAN'S REMARKS RE NICARAGUA IN NEW YORK AS GRACIOUS. SOMOZA SAID HE PLANNED TO VISIT COSTA RICA IN MARCH.

8. IN FURTHER DISCUSSION SOMOZA REFERRED TO HIS PAST SOCIAL RECORD (E.G., 50,000 HOMES, ELECTRIFICATION, ETC.), AS THE REASON THE STRIKE HAD FAILED. HE REFERRED TO UDEL AS NOT HAVING OVER TEN THOUSAND SUPPORTERS AND BEING KEPT ALIVE ONLY BY THE U.S. TO THE AMB'S
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QUESTION WHETHER ALLOWING REGISTRATION OF NEW PARTIES WOULD LEAD TO A LIBERAL PARTY SPLIT, SOMOZA SAID NO. SOMOZA ALSO EXPLAINED HE IS HAVING PROBLEMS CONVINCING HIS SUPPORTERS THAT THE COMMUNISTS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. HE WONDERED IF THIS WAS UR INTENTION IN URGING OPENING UP THE POLITICAL PROCESS. AMB EXPLAINED THAT OUR PURPOSE WAS NOT SPECIFICALLY TO REQUIRE THAT THE COMMUNISTS BE ALLOWED TO REGISTER AS A PARTY BUT THAT HE BELIEVED THEY DID NOT POSE AN ELECTORAL THREAT IN NICARAGUA.

9. SOMOZA SAID NICARAGUA WAS PROGRESSING DESPITE BEING A LITTLE COUNTRY, THAT HIS RECORD WAS NOT SO BAD. RE U.S. POLICY HE SAID HE PREFERRED THE LEADERSHIP POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA OF PRES. KENNEDY, NOT THE LOW PROFILE OF PRES. NIXON. HE COMPLAINED ABOUT MISINFORMATION BEING GIVEN OUT BY EMB STAFF. HE SAID ONE OFFICER HAD BEEN PREDICTING HIS OVERTHROW. THE AMB ASSURED HIM HE WAS WRONG AND THAT HIS SOURCES OF INFORMATION WERE NO GOOD.

10. COMMENT: SOMOZA IS MOVING VERY SLOWLY ALONG THE LINES OF OUR PRESSURE BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HIS SPEECH NEXT SUNDAY WILL BE WELL RECEIVED BY THE OPPOSITION. THEY WILL WANT TO SEE MORE CONCRETE INDICATIONS OF COMMITMENT TO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE.
RUBENSTEIN

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